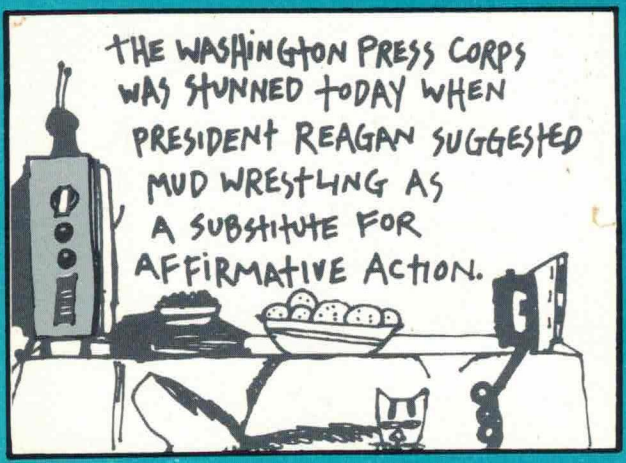
To Err Is REAGAN

LIES AND DECEPTIONS FROM THE PRESIDENT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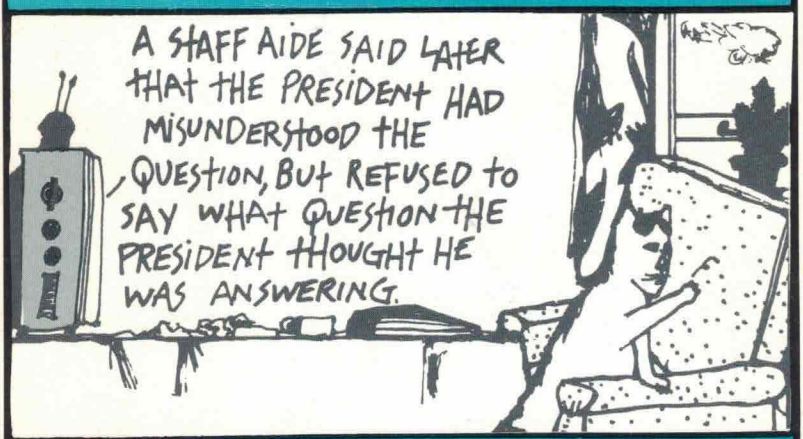
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By Mark Green

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To Err is Reagan: Lies and Deceptions from the President

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From the Publisher

This little book is wonderfully entertaining, yet deadly serious. We chuckle as we review the incredible array of gaffes and absurdities that have come out of Ronald Reagan's mouth. And then we remember the darker side.

We are reminded that Reagan's aw-shucks style has shielded him well. That for seven long years the television cameras failed to penetrate the affable smoke screen. That as reporters flocked to staged photo opportunities, unseen cowboy diplomats were directing a foreign policy based on profit and jingoism—a situation perhaps unprecedented in our history. The human toll of this shameful abuse of power is quite staggering. The diminution of the United States' moral authority is all too apparent.

What can we do about it? Can each of us—angered and appalled by what's taken place over the past seven years—find the strength to continue struggling for a more representative government? We must, and we will.

Don Hazen, Publisher

As an author, consumer advocate, Senate candidate, and one of Nader's Raiders, Mark Green has continued to chronicle this dark age in American politics. If you appreciate this booklet, be sure to watch for his new book *Ronald Reagan's Reign of Error, II: The Instant Nostalgia Edition,* co-authored with Gail MacColl, published by Pantheon Books and available in October, 1987.

Amiable Dunce Or Chronic Liar?

"I'm going to run for president. I have all the qualifications. I'm on TV. I'm an actor. And I'm a liar." David Leisure, who plays Joe Isuzu in TV commercials.

In 1983, journalist Gail MacColl and I published *There He Goes Again: Ronald Reagan's Reign of Error*, a compilation of 300 documented misstatements that showed Ronald Reagan's standard operating procedure to be a blend of ignorance, amnesia, and dissembling. Like a panicky passenger lunging for a life preserver, under stress he would concoct almost any fact, anecdote, or analysis to advance his ideological beliefs.

Recall, for example, that Reagan actually said that the pope explicitly supported his policy of aiding the contras...that Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes remarked, "Keep the government poor and remain free"...that Brezhnev invented the nuclear freeze idea. Since none of these statements was true, Ronald Reagan brought to mind a comment often attributed to Will Rogers: "It's not what he doesn't know that bothers me; it's what he knows for sure that just ain't so."

Reagan's Reign of Error, however, provoked an indignant response from some loyalists and journalists. Former presidential aide David Gergen explained that because Reagan often spoke in parables ("like Lincoln"), errors on small details were less important than Reagan's "larger points." Commentator Pat Buchanan argued that other presidents had misspoken more. Laurence Barrett of *Time* thought our point was "exaggerated."

With Reagan's landslide victory over Mondale, I seemed destined to spend the rest of my life driving my children over Ronald Reagan highways to Ronald Reagan high schools—while my kids would regard me as a crank on the subject of our revered 40th president.

Until Irangate. Now that President Reagan has had to repudiate nearly everything he originally said about the Iranian arms sale, everyone other than perhaps the First Lady knows that our 40th president is a chronic dissembler. The current scandal has finally converted Mr. Teflon into Mr. Velcro. But given the Niagara of evidence of Reagan's previous deceptions, why did it take six years for an acquiescing public and press to catch on? Will Reagan's

revisionists succeed in isolating Irangate as an exception?

Given the new consensus on Reagan, it's fair to wonder why for so long "we licensed his beguiling forgeries," in the words of Garry Wills, author of *Reagan's America: Innocents at Home.* Perhaps the public was weary of so many failed presidents in a row. Perhaps it has enjoyed Reagan's rehearsed sincerity for the same reason it enjoys magicians, another profession that elevates image over substance: "The public," said a spokesperson for a magicians' association, "wants a fraud it can believe in."

It's one thing, however, for an instinctively trusting public to be gulled by a politician. But a press corps, too?

True, there were periodic articles about Reagan's "gaffes" or "mistakes." And several journalists stand out as regularly sounding the alarm about our Great Prevaricator: Lou Cannon, Richard Cohen, Anthony Lewis, Elizabeth Drew, Sam Donaldson, and Jack Nelson come to mind. Essentially, though, the media have glorified Reagan. Who can forget *Time*'s 1986 cover story, "Why Is This Man So Popular?", which gushed that "Reagan's personal authenticity is one of his greatest strengths, one reason why people tend to trust him....Reagan has turned out like nothing that his critics foretold, not the amiable dunce nor the dimwitted geriatric that they joked about, receding into befuddled twilight."

Until a small pro-Syrian magazine in Beirut broke the political story of the decade, the American media never laid a glove on Reagan. Why?

First, many journalists were mesmerized by the aura of the presidency in general and Reagan's earlier stratospheric poll ratings in particular. Because Reagan was more popular than the press, concluded Robert Parry of *Newsweek*, the press "seemed to be a little fearful that if it wrote stories that were perceived as tough on this president, the public would not like them." Second, Reagan's charming reaction to and recovery from the 1981 assassination attempt gave him added insulation. Soon after, Roger Mudd reported that "most Americans want to give him a chance, and especially they want the media to give him a chance." Third, exposing Reagan surely risked loss of access to him and those top aides on whom reporters relied for their information, a dependency that afflicts every press corps assigned to a particular institution.

Fourth, it's awkward for the media to keep reporting Reagan's mistakes. Repeatedly saying the president was wrong would not be new, hence not news; so the administration would continue its

routine fibs, knowing the media wouldn't routinely keep exposing them. Fifth, as Sidney Blumenthal described in a seminal *New Republic* piece, "For Reagan, facts are means. For journalists, facts are ends." So when the press occasionally cross-examined Reagan's "facts," he couldn't have cared less. Sixth, there's a false objectivity that stopped some media from chronicling Reagan's mistakes because it might have *appeared* partisan; neutrality, then, meant covering *neither* Reagan's nor Mondale's misstatements, even though only the former profusely made them.

Last, depending on whether one attributed Reagan's misstatements to malice or ignorance, who in the media wanted to believe that the leader of the free world was either a chronic liar or an amiable dunce?

The Reagan White House grew contemptuous of the compliant media. For example, when shown that Reagan had cited a nonexistent British law to disparage gun control, press secretary Larry Speakes responded, "It made the point, didn't it?" And recall how chief of staff Donald Regan last year referred to himself with bravado as the "shovel brigade," cleaning up after the president's elephantine blunderings of Bitburg, Reykjavik, and the Libyan disinformation campaign.

The Iran debacle, though, has now performed like the little boy telling the naked truth about the overrated emperor. For Reagan's deceptions were so large and prolific as to overcome the media's natural caution. After all, this president has repeatedly pledged as a first principle that he'd never encourage terrorism by trading arms for hostages; and the month before selling arms to Iran, he had called that country an example of the "outlaw states run by the strangest collection of misfits, Looney Tunes, and squalid criminals since the advent of the Third Reich." Here was the equivalent of an Elmer Gantry caught in bed, a hypocrisy so obvious that Reagan's usual evasions, denials, and head bobs couldn't cut any ice. And when his popularity suffered an unprecedented plunge—one out of three Reagan supporters jumped ship in November 1986—the media finally plunged in.

This booklet takes up where *Reagan's Reign of Error* left off by providing some recent, representative instances of dissembling. True, by now it should be clear that Reagan can't make a major statement without making a major misstatement. Still, it's essential to further chronicle Reagan's "errors" for two audiences—the public and the '88 presidential candidates.

First, the public should be inoculated with evidence to ward off those inevitable Reagan revisionists who will try to explain away the Iran-contra episode. Already, columnist William F. Buckley, Jr., acknowledges only that, yes, the president has slipped "on a banana peel," media critic Reed Irvine blames the left-wing press for excessive and biased coverage, and Pat Buchanan (now two for two in failed conservative presidents) says that FDR, too, broke some laws.

Second, future candidates and presidents should be encouraged to choose the FDR model over the RR model. Both performed well on stage. But while Reagan essentially has been the Chauncey Gardiner of *Being There*, a deliverer of homilies off a TelePrompTer, Roosevelt tried to stick to the facts, as described by his speech writer, Robert Sherwood, in *Roosevelt and Hopkins*: "The *New York Times* can make mistakes—the *World Almanac* can make mistakes—but the president of the United States must not make mistakes. This constant thought imposed a harrowing responsibility. After 1940, the White House had its resident statistician, Isador Lubin, the commissioner of labor statistics, who was constantly available and incalculably valuable to Roosevelt and to Hopkins in checking every decimal point."

So what follows are examples of Reaganality, skipping over the more familiar howlers. They are reminders of what happens when citizens and journalists get swayed by style over substance.

The Power of Positive Thinking

On the progress achieved toward ending apartheid: "They have eliminated the segregation that we once had in our own country...the type of thing where hotels and restaurants and places of entertainment and so forth were segregated—that has all been eliminated." (New York Times, *9/7/85*)

As the White House later admitted, segregation has been eliminated in only a few dozen South African restaurants and hotels throughout the whole country. The Group Areas Act, segregating the areas where blacks, whites, Indians, and mixed-race South Africans can live, is still in effect. Rest rooms, cemeteries, and most beaches are also still segregated.

"One of the many who wrote me about this visit was a young woman who had recently been bas mitzvahed. She urged me to lay the wreath at Bitburg cemetery in honor of the future of Germany, and that is what we have done." (New York Daily News, *5/8/85*)

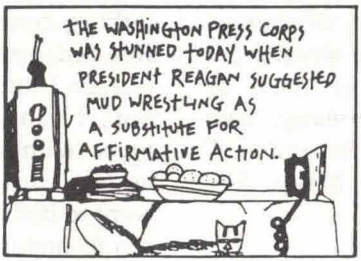
Not exactly. Thirteen-year-old Beth Flom did *not* urge the president to visit the Bitburg cemetery. Her letter to Reagan read in part: "Although I understand your position, I cannot bring myself to agree with your solution." She added, however, that *if* he went to Bitburg, he should do so not to honor the soldiers of the German army and SS buried there, but "in honor of the future of Germany." Reagan later apologized for having distorted the letter.

"Nineteen brave men died during the Grenada rescue, serving their country and the cause of freedom. One of them was Sean Luketina....A few months ago, Sean died of his wounds. But he...gave his life in the cause of freedom. He did not die in vain." (*First anniversary of Grenada action, 10/24/84*)

Two days later the *Washington Post* reported that Luketina had died from wounds suffered when a U.S. Navy aircraft mistakenly fired on the paratrooper's command post. (Washington Post, 10/26/84)

"We were dealing with moderates in Iran...." (*Radio address, 12/6/86*)

According to our Israeli intermediaries, we were "dealing with the most radical elements [in Iran]...." (Israeli counterterrorism expert Amiram Nir to George Bush, 7/24/86)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Cartoon by Nicole Hollander

"Here's the Rest of Me"

"I'm no linguist, but I have been told that in the Russian language, there isn't even a word for freedom."(10/29/85)

The Russian word for freedom is *svoboda*. The Russian word for gaffe is *ogovorka*.

Attacking the theories of British economist John Maynard Keynes: "a legacy from a period when I was back in college studying economics." (Wall Street Journal, *12/12/86*)

Keynes's classic text, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*, was first published in 1936. Eureka College's most famous graduate received his B.A. in economics in 1932.

Asked if he were aware of the Nazi SS massacre of the residents of the French village of Oradour: "Yes, I know all the bad things that happened in that war. I was in uniform four years myself." (Interview with foreign journalists, 4/29/85)

In costume is more like it. Reagan spent WWII making Army Air Corps training films at Hal Roach Studios in Hollywood.

"That moment I thought, this is the time for which I saved the film, and I showed it to a group of people who couldn't believe their eyes. From then on, I was concerned for the Jewish people." (Remarks to prime minister of Israel Yitzhak Shamir, 11/29/83)

President Reagan told Shamir (and, two-and-a-half months later, he also told Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal) that he had been an Army photographer assigned to film Nazi death camps. The only problem with this story is that Reagan never left the United States during World War II. He was called to active duty in April 1942, serving briefly at Fort Mason in San Francisco. He spent the rest of the war with the First Motion Picture Unit of the Army Air Corps, making training films in Hollywood and living at home.

"By the time I got out of the Army Air Corps, all I wanted to do...was to rest up awhile, make love to my wife, and come up refreshed to a better job in an ideal world. (As it came out, I was disappointed in all these postwar ambitions.)" (Where's the Rest of Me?, *his 1965 autobiography*)

Don't let this happen to you! As Garry Wills points out in his book *Reagan's America: Innocents at Home*, the future commander in chief spent the war years making training films. Since he slept in his own bed every night, one wonders why he couldn't make love to his then-wife, Jane Wyman.

During their first summit, President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev exchanged chitchat about the president's movies. Watching himself on the screen, Reagan said, was "like seeing the son you never had." (From "Reagan's Shifting Standards" by Mary McGrory, November 1985)

There was no reported comment from Michael Edward Reagan (adopted by Reagan and Jane Wyman in the spring of 1946), nor any comment from Ronald Prescott Reagan (born May 20, 1958, to Reagan and his second wife, Nancy Davis).

"In California some time ago, a man beat a woman so savagely that her unborn child was born dead with a fractured skull. And the California state legislature unanimously passed a law that was signed by the then-Democratic governor, signed a law, that said that any man who so abuses a pregnant woman that he causes the death of her unborn child shall be charged with murder." (First debate with Mondale, 10/7/84)

The "Democratic governor" was actually a Republican governor named Ronald Reagan.

"Well, I don't think I've used the Bible to further political ends...." (Washington Post, 2/22/85)

Wrong. Here's what he told the National Religious Broadcasters just two weeks before: "We mean to maintain a strong defense, because only with a strong defense can we preserve the peace we cherish. And I found myself wanting to remind you of what Jesus said in Luke 14:31: 'Oh, what king, when he sets out to...meet another king in battle will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with 10,000 men to encounter the one coming against him with 20,000. Or else, while the other is still far away, sends a delegation and asks the terms of peace.' I don't think the Lord that blessed this country, as no other country has ever been blessed, intends for us to have to someday negotiate because of our weakness."

"In December, when I looked north from the White House, I would see the huge menorah celebrating the Passover season in Lafayette Park." (*Remarks at the National Religious Broadcasters Annual Convention, 2/4/85*)

The menorah is used to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, and "the Passover season" is in spring (same as Easter).

Ignorance of the Law Is...Bliss

Replying to a letter from Norman Lear, in which Lear asked him to disassociate himself from supporters intent on "Christianizing America," Reagan described a case in which courts forbade voluntary prayer by schoolchildren before their cookies and milk. (New York Times, *11/4/84*)

Mr. Lear looked up the case and, surprised, wrote back to tell the president the actual decision of the case. *Stein v. Oshinsky* settled the question of *teacher-led* prayer before cookies and milk. The court did not specifically rule against *voluntary* individual prayer. Later, in his first debate with Walter Mondale, the president told the story again...the wrong way.

"With me, abortion is not a problem of religion. It's a problem of the Constitution. I believe that until and unless someone can establish that the unborn child is not a living human being, then that child is already protected by the Constitution, which guarantees life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to all of us." (First debate with Walter Mondale, 10/7/84)

The Declaration of Independence refers to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, not the Constitution.

On why he pre-empted the South Africa sanctions bill with an executive order of his own: "You see this wouldn't have been necessary if I had what a president should have, which is line-item veto. I could have signed the bill and line-item vetoed out..." (9/9/85)

All the line-item bills pending in Congress refer only to *appropriations* bills, not laws or executive orders affecting foreign affairs.

"One of the violations of theirs [the USSR] has been that they were taking nuclear missile submarines out of action, but they were cutting them down and rebuilding them as cruise-missile-carrying submarines." (2/21/85)

Yet the White House three weeks earlier had sent a report on Soviet treaty compliance to Congress that said: "Finding: The U.S. Government judges that the Soviet Union's conversion of a dismantled SSBN into a submarine longer than the original and carrying modern, long-range cruise missiles is not a violation of its political commitment under the SALT I interim agreement."

"Remember, the SALT II is nothing but a limitation on how fast you increase weapons." (Los Angeles Times, *1/9/85*)

SALT II placed specific and absolute limits on missiles and bombers. If it had been ratified by the United States, the Soviet Union would have been required to scrap some 250 of its most powerful missiles.

NE-VER MIND

On the efforts of private groups aiding the contras: "I don't believe it was counter to our law, but these people were voluntarily offering help, just as we have seen in the past. We had a thing called the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain in the civil war there." (*Press conference, 3/19/87*)

About face, march! For here's what Reagan thought of the brigade on 10/25/84: "Well, if you get into the moral issue of it, we were certainly tested with regard to that Spanish Civil War I mentioned, because I would say that the individuals that went there [the Abraham Lincoln Brigade] were, in the opinion of most Americans, fighting on the wrong side."

"[The Job Corps is a] vital program...in keeping with the American spirit of helping others to reach their full potential, a spirit that has sustained our nation from its very founding....Nancy and I send everyone present our best wishes for future success." (Washington Post, 4/22/85)

The Job Corps should have asked the president just how long a successful future he had in mind for them when he sent the congratulatory telegram to a party commemorating the 20th anniversary of the founding of the corps in September 1984. For five months later, in February 1985, he proposed in his 1986 budget that the Job Corps be abolished.

"Last September [1982], for example, he [Reagan] said of abortion: 'I think the fact that children have been born even down to the three-month stage and have lived, the record shows, to become normal human beings...'" (*Joseph Kraft in the* Washington Post, *8/2/83*)

Dr. Douglas Richardson, attending physician at the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of Harvard Medical School's Brigham and Women's Hospital, says that survival of a three-month fetus would be "physiologically impossible." Survival of an infant born even at 23-1/2 weeks (5-1/2—6 months) is "exceedingly rare... almost unprecedented."

Speaking on the activities of feminists: "In the 1982 election, it was made apparent that some of those who are most active in this are most active if it's in behalf of the Democratic candidates. Let me just point out: We had some fine Republican women candidates, and they didn't get any help or support...." (USA Today, *8/27/83*)

The California GOP Senate primary candidate in 1982, one Maureen Elizabeth Reagan, received the support of the National Women's Political Caucus.

"In their debate (October 21, 1984), the president called attention to a Democratic campaign commercial about national defense in which Mondale stands on the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz. *Reagan said that if Mondale 'had had his way when the* Nimitz *was being planned, he would have been deep in the water out there, because there wouldn't have been any* Nimitz *to stand on.'" (UPI, 10/22/84)*

Mondale aides said that the ad was filmed aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Midway*, which was commissioned in September 1945—long before Mondale became a senator voting on military appropriations.

"In virtually every measure of military power, the Soviet Union enjoys a decided advantage." (Washington Monthly, *February 1984*)

General John Vessey, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, when asked if he'd trade his capabilities with those of Marshal Ogarkov, his opposite in the USSR, replied, "Not on your life." The same sentiments came from his predecessors, General David Jones; Admiral Thomas Hayward (recently retired chief of naval operations); and General Lew Allen (former USAF chief of staff).

Speaking to Western Hemisphere legislators: "...[there has] never been a war between two free countries." (1/24/85)

What about:

- The War of 1812 (U.S. versus Britain)
- The Boer War (British settlers versus Dutch settlers in South Africa)
- Middle East wars between Israel and Egypt (1948, 1956, 1967, 1973)
- Wars between Chile and Peru

A Very Foreign Policy

"Very few [of the German people are] alive that remember even the war, and certainly none of them who were adults and participating in any way." (Time, 4/29/85)

Tell that to Klaus Barbie, a Gestapo chief in Nazi-occupied France, on trial at the age of 73. West Germany's President Richard von Weizacker, 67 years old, and Franz Josef Strauss, the 72-year-old ministerpresident of Bavaria, are both veterans of Hitler's army, as are several hundreds of thousands of other German citizens.

Asked about the impact of the fixed election in the Philippines that Marcos purportedly won, Reagan said, "Well, I think that we're concerned about the violence that was evident there and the possibility of fraud, although it could have been that all of that was occurring on both sides." (2/11/86)

All independent accounts of the Philippine election confirmed massive fraud by the Marcos forces. Responding the next day to Reagan's remarks, Corazon Aquino said, "I would wonder at the motives of a friend of democracy who chose to conspire with Mr. Marcos to cheat the Filipino people of their liberation."

"I think to put it that way, that they [black marchers in South Africa] were simply killed and that the violence was coming totally from the law-and-order side ignores the fact that there was rioting going on on behalf of others there." (*Press conference, 3/21/85*)

What makes the president think there was rioting in Uitenhage, South Africa, before the police opened fire, killing 20 people? A judge appointed by the South African government concluded that the charge that demonstrators were throwing rocks at police "was fabricated...to justify the shooting."

"Can the United States, or the free world for that matter, stand by and see the Middle East incorporated into the Soviet bloc? What of Western Europe's and Japan's dependence on Middle East oil for the energy to fuel their industries?" (Television address, 10/27/83)

Can the rhetorical question be overused? While these words may sound like a Churchillian pep talk for a world war, it's just President Reagan's effort to justify keeping our Marines in Lebanon after a car bomb killed 241 Americans. Evidently, the stakes for the Western world were not as high as the president imagined. We pulled out five months later. After a year, the Israeli army also withdrew. To date, the Middle East has not been incorporated into the Soviet bloc, nor has Israel ceased to exist.

"I did not openly criticize [former President Jimmy Carter for the Iranian hostage situation]. As a matter of fact, in the closing days of the campaign...I didn't say any word or make any statement on the situation...." (New York Daily News, *6/19/85*)

Oh yes he did. Take just one example from October 21, 1980: "I believe that this administration's foreign policy helped create the entire situation.... And I think the fact that they've been held there that long is a humiliation and a disgrace to this country."

When asked about reports from the Middle East that the United States had sold arms to Iran, Reagan said, "The speculation...has no foundation." (11/6/86)

Uh-huh.

All in the Family: Imitating the Boss

Vice President George Bush: "Spending for food stamps is way, way up under the Reagan administration. AFDC is up under the Reagan administration, and I am not going to be found wrong on that. I am sure of my facts...." (Debate with Geraldine Ferraro, 10/11/84)

Sure enough, figures from the Office of Management and Budget tell a different story. Food stamp spending *dropped* from $12.485 billion in fiscal 1981 to $10.764 billion in fiscal 1984. During that same period, welfare spending fell from $9.434 billion to $7.201 billion (all figures adjusted to constant 1983 dollars).

Secretary of State George Shultz on the state of our nuclear stockpile: "We work to reduce the number of these weapons....If you go back to the 1960s and compare the amount of destructive capability of our nuclear arsenal now as compared with then...it's about 70 percent less." (Washington Post, *12/27/83*)

Two days after Shultz gave his assessment, Defense Secretary Weinberger told reporters that the stockpile numbers had declined 25 percent from the 1960s. Neither man, however, acknowledged that those 1960s reductions were due to a shift from a larger number of high-yield bombs (such as the 20 megaton B41 bomb) to a smaller number of more-accurate, lower-yield warheads. There were a greater number of bombs than warheads because not as many bombs were expected to reach their targets.

Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams: "There is no single leader that has more credibility than Arturo Cruz, certainly in this country and I would say in Nicaragua. Nobody's irreplaceable, but he comes as close as you can get." (Washington Post, *2/19/87*)

The show must go on! Less than a month later, on March 9, 1987, Cruz resigned. Said Abrams: "The resistance does not depend on any individual leader and in fact is now moving toward a larger and broad directorate."

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger: "The United States is not mining the harbors of Nicaragua." (*4/8/84*)

According to an article in *Time* published two weeks later, "An inter-agency committee representing State, Defense, and the CIA by the end of 1983 agreed on a package of measures, including mining. The President approved the package...."

Attorney General Edwin Meese III explained why the Supreme Court's Miranda decision (holding that suspects have a right to remain silent and have a lawyer present during questioning) is unnecessary: "You don't have many suspects who are innocent of a crime. That's contradictory. If a person is innocent of a crime, then he is not a suspect." (U.S. News and World Report, *10/14/85*)

No comment.

United States Information Agency director Charles Z. Wick told columnist William Safire in December 1983 that he had never secretly tape-recorded his office telephone conversations.

A week later, Wick admitted that he had lied to Safire. He had recorded "a small percentage" of such calls without informing the other party. (*New York Times*, 12/28/83)

Former Secretary of the Interior James Watt said that he had never heard of the Holocaust until he became secretary of the interior." (*The* New Republic, *2/25/85*)

R. Leonard Vance, director of health standards at OSHA, told a House subcommittee in late March 1984 that documents it sought in an investigation of possible misconduct had been destroyed when his dogs threw up on them. (Common Cause *magazine, July/August 1984*)

Dr. George Graham, one of the 13 members of Reagan's Commission on Hunger: "[T]he biggest problem among the poor is obesity—not hunger." In 1982, he said: "As we look at the problems of our blacks, all we have to do is look at our sports page to see who are the best nourished in the country." (*Reported in the* Economist, *1/14/84*)

White House spokesman Larry Speakes: "No member of the National Security Council staff has, at any time, acted in violation of either the spirit or the letter of existing legislation dealing with U.S. assistance to the democratic resistance in Nicaragua." (New York Times, *8/9/85*)*

*National security advisor Robert McFarlane: "I can state with deep personal conviction that at no time did I or any member of the National Security Council staff violate the letter or spirit of the law." (Letter to Representative Lee Hamilton, chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, 9/5/85)**

*National security advisor John Poindexter: "The actions of the National Security Council staff were in compliance with both the spirit and the letter of the law regarding support of the Nicaraguan resistance." (Letter to Representative Lee Hamilton, 7/21/86)**

**These quotes were provided by the Institute for Policy Studies' forthcoming* In Contempt of Congress.

No Comment

"I think we should keep the grain and export the farmers." (*Gridiron Club Dinner, 3/23/85*)

"One problem that we've had...is the people who are sleeping on the grates, the homeless, who are homeless, you might say, by choice." (*Reagan on* Good Morning America, *1/31/84*)

"Another country was facilitating those sales of weapons systems [to Iran]. They then were overcharging and were apparently putting the money into bank accounts of the leaders of the contras. It wasn't us funneling money to them. This was another country." (*Reagan interview in* Time, *12/8/86*)

After it was disclosed that a CIA manual advocated that the contras "neutralize" local Sandinista officials and "shoot" informers, Reagan dismissed the story as "a great big scare [because] there was nothing in that manual that had anything to do with assassinations or anything of that kind." When asked how a Nicaraguan official can be removed from office without violence, Reagan answered, "You just say to the fellow that's sitting there in the office, 'You're not in the office anymore.'" (Time, *11/12/84*)

When he visited a McDonald's for a photo opportunity during the fall '84 election campaign, Reagan asked aides, "What am I supposed to order?" (New York Daily News, *11/31/84*)

Following a half-hour lecture by the Lebanese foreign minister on the intricate realities of his country's many political factions, Reagan said: "You know, your nose looks just like Danny Thomas's." (*The* Nation, *2/18/84*)

THE NAME GAME

What He Said	What He Meant
"...Great pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Mrs. Yew to Singapore."	"...Great pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Mrs. Lee to Washington."
The people of Bolivia	The people of Brazil
Sugar Ray and Mrs. Ray	Sugar Ray Leonard and Mrs. Leonard
Chairman Moe	Chairman Doe of Liberia
Princess David	Princess Diana
Emmett Lazarus	Poetess Emma Lazarus
Don Rickles	Sen. Don Nickles
"Don"	William Ruckelhaus
Ed Nitze	Paul H. Nitze
Mr. Mayor	H.U.D. Secretary Pierce

What He Did

How he signed his name on the 1986 tax reform bill: "Reagan Ronald."